

# Basic *Watercolor Washes*

## What's a wash?

A “wash” is a basic watercolor technique that will come in handy nearly every time you pick up your brush to start a new painting.

- Most often it is used anytime you need to cover a large area of your paper with paint.

## Flat Wash

- As the name “flat wash” implies, your aim is to end up with a “flat” or “even” wash of color throughout the entire area that you’re painting.
- A successful flat wash results in a seamless field of color without break, variation, or flaw.

## Graded Wash

A variation on the basic wash is the graded wash.

- This technique requires the pigment to be diluted slightly with more water for each horizontal stroke.
- The result is a wash that fades out gradually and evenly

## Things to consider when creating a wash....

### Gravity

- You can use gravity to help direct the flow of your washes.
- With your board at an angle you are always sure the paint will flow down.
- If your board is flat, your paint could flow in any direction. If you paint with your board tilted upward you will always know which direction the paint will run.

### Timing & the Amount of Paint You Need

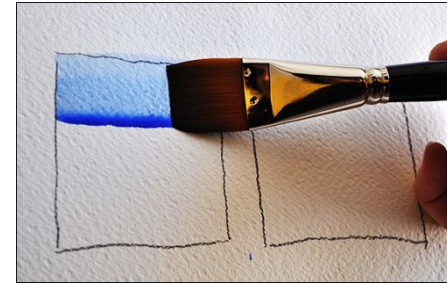
- It's a good idea to mix enough paint to cover the entire area with your wash BEFORE you start on it.
- Watercolor painting is all about timing—as soon as the paint hits the paper it begins to be absorbed by the paper and starts to dry. Applying wet paint to drying paint may cause streaks, brush lines and “blossoms” that you never intended.
- By having enough paint mixed at the start, you can work quickly before the last stroke gets a chance to dry. Give yourself the best chance for a great wash by mixing plenty of paint to begin with.

### Brush Size

- Always consider your brush size.
- Use the largest brush you have to cover large surface areas.
- It will take less time, and the fewer brush strokes the better

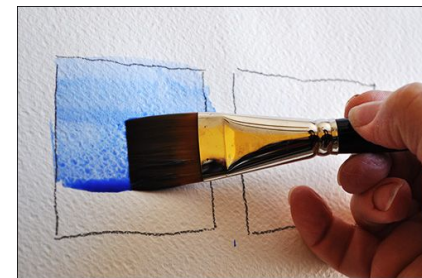
Here's what it looks like when  
*Painting a Flat Wash...*

Begin in the first, completely dry square by starting at the top of one edge and painting evenly across the paper to the other edge. You should see a "bead" or "pool" of wet paint appear at the bottom of your paintbrush's horizontal stroke.

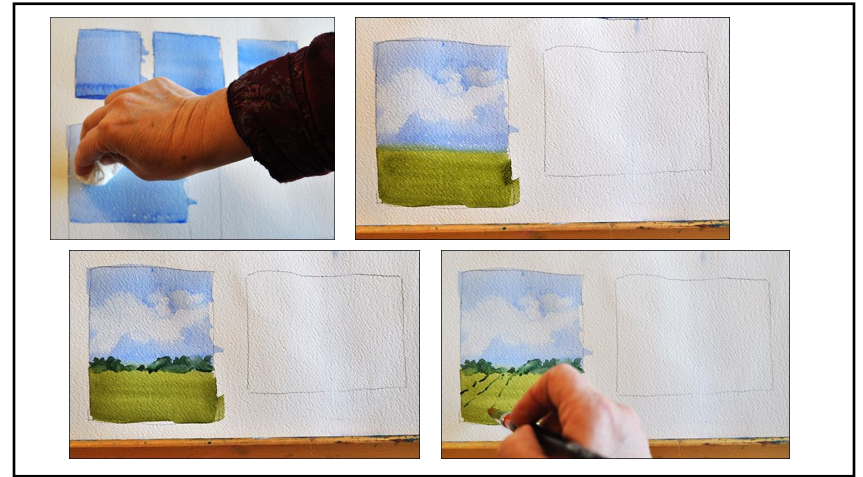


If you apply too much paint for your board's current angle, you'll see drips running down from your stroke towards the bottom of your paper. You can mop up these drips with a paper towel, but you should aim to have a "bead" hanging there on the paper and no runs.

Reload your brush with paint and, touching the bead of paint as you go, pull another stroke across the square just below your other horizontal stroke. Continue in this fashion (reloading your brush each time) until you complete the square



Practice: Mini Simple Landscape



## Practice, practice!

Watercolor painting is challenging, but you cannot learn until you make mistakes. Keep painting! These small exercises are perfect for developing your skills, so don't hesitate to fill your paper with several more "flat wash" landscapes. As you practice, you will make fewer mistakes and have more control.

More Basic  
*Watercolor Techniques*

## Lifting

Most watercolor pigment can be dissolved and lifted off while still wet and/or after it has dried.

- The process for lifting off is simple - wet the area to be removed with a brush and clean water then blot the pigment away with a tissue.
- Using strips of paper to mask areas of pigment will produce interesting hard edged lines and shapes

## Glazing

Glazing is a similar watercolor technique to a wash, but uses a thin, transparent pigment applied over dry existing washes.

- Its purpose is to adjust the color and tone of the underlying wash.
- Be sure each layer is thoroughly dry before applying the next

## Wet in Wet

Wet in wet is simply the process of applying pigment to wet paper.

- The results vary from soft undefined shapes to slightly blurred marks, depending on how wet the paper is.
- The wet in wet technique can be applied over existing washes provided they are thoroughly dry. Simply wet the paper with a large brush and paint into the dampness.
- The soft marks made by painting wet in wet are great for subtle background regions of your painting.

## Dry Brush

Dry brush is the almost the opposite watercolor technique to wet in wet. Here a brush loaded with pigment (and not too much water) is dragged over completely dry paper.

- The marks produced by this technique are very crisp and hard edged. Provides more sharply defined details
- Tend to come forward in your painting and so are best applied around the center of interest (focal point)

## Dropping in Color

This technique is simply the process of introducing a color to a wet region of the painting and allowing it to blend, bleed, and feather without interruption.

- The result is sometimes unpredictable but yields interesting and vibrant color gradations that can't be achieved by mixing the pigment on the palette.